TOWN OF ARLINGTON
TOWN MEETING ELECTRONIC VOTING STUDY COMMITTEE
November 28, 2012

Call to Order

The postponed meeting of the Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee was called to order by Committee Chair Eric Helmuth in the Second Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall Annex on Wednesday, November 28, 2012, at 7:35 PM. The notice calling this meeting is appended to these minutes.

Quorum

A quorum was present: Elizabeth Patton, Steve Storch, Raymond Charbonneau III, John Leone, Alan Jones, Wes Beal, Adam Auster, and Eric Helmuth.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION
Correction of Minutes

Adam Auster moved that the minutes of the October 22, 2012, meeting be corrected by deleting the word "Thursday" in the motion to set the time of the next meeting on page 3 of the minutes.

The motion passed.

MOTION
Approval of Minutes

Wes Beal moved that the minutes of the October 22, 2012, meeting be approved.

The motion passed.

Reports

Brookline Special Town Meeting

Eric Helmuth and Elizabeth Patton, who attended a special Town Meeting in Brookline where electronic voting was used, reported that Brookline's hand-held voting device is smaller and simpler than that observed in Framingham.

However, they said, the smaller devices could not support enough users to for Arlington's town meeting.

Ms. Patton said that the yeas and nays were asked to stand during electronic roll-call votes.

She said that when a Brookline Town Meeting member reported a malfunctioning handheld device, a working device was quickly substituted.

Framingham Special Town Meeting

Steve Storch reported that in Framingham the practice was to start with a show of hands, not a voice vote, and then proceed to an electronic roll-call at the request of members or the discretion of the Moderator.

A written report describing a visit by Steve Storch, Eric Helmuth, and Adam Auster to the Framingham Special Town Meeting on October 23rd is attached to these minutes.

New Business

Committee Report

The Committee discussed the elements of its report to Town Meeting, including warrant articles and bylaw amendments, based on the following outline proposed by Alan Jones.

Introduction: Members, background, work history, summary

Benefits of and concerns about electronic voting

Voting methods and legal requirements

Primer on electronic voting

Vendors

Selection Methodology

Recommendations: Articles, bylaws, vendor and equipment, capital and annual costs

Appendices and attachments

Questions & Answers

MOTION: *Warrant Article*	John Leone moved that the Committee sponsor the following warrant article for the 2013 Annual Town Meeting:
	To see if the Town will vote to appropriate a sum of money for the purchase or lease of electronic voting equipment for use at Town Meeting, determine how said sum will be raised and expended, or take any action related thereto.
	The motion passed.
MOTION: *Warrant Article*	Wes Beal moved that the Committee sponsor the following warrant article for the 2013 Annual Town Meeting:
	To see if the Town will vote to amend the Town Bylaws to amend the method of voting at Town Meeting, or take any action related thereto.
	The motion passed.
MOTION: *Regular Committee Meetings*	Adam Auster moved that the Committee should meet regularly on the first and third Wednesdays of every month.
	The motion passed.
MOTION: *Adjournment*	John Leone moved to adjourn.
	The motion passed.
Adjournment	The meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.

<div align="right">Adam Auster, Secretary</div>

Correction	The committee-report outline suggested by Alan Jones was corrected to include "voting methods and legal requirements."
APPROVED as corrected December 5, 2012	Adam Auster, *Secretary*.

Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee

Eric Helmuth, Chair | Adam Auster, Secretary

Wednesday, November 28, 2012, 7:30 p.m.

Town Hall Annex, 2nd floor Meeting Room

AGENDA:

1 - Call to Order

2 - Review and Approval of Minutes

3 - Discussion of Brookline Special Town Meeting observation

4 - Defining our deliverables as a committee – Alan Jones

5 - Set a regular meeting schedule

6 - New Business

7 - Adjournment

Observations – Framingham Special Town Meeting, 23 October 2012

Adam Auster
Eric Helmuth
Steve Storch
Arlington Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee

Adam Auster, Eric Helmuth, and Steve Storch observed the initial 2+ hours of Framingham's special town meeting session on October 23rd, 2012, during which period an electronic voting ("e-voting") system was used for approximately 3-4 votes. The following summarizes some observations that may be of relevance as the full Arlington Town Meeting Electronic Voting Study Committee considers the efficacy and ramifications of a possible e-voting implementation for Arlington TM.

TM voting procedure; TM member perception; anonymity vs. accountability

We observed a combination of raised-hand votes and e-votes. (Framingham does not take voice votes.) A rules committee member told us that e-voting could be invoked (1) by the moderator or (2) by members doubting the result of a show of hands. E-voting was used during the meeting for votes on a number of contentious financial amendments.

One of the members publicly asked (via a point of order) that the e-vote system be used prior to the votes on the financial amendments: "We paid enough for these, so we should use them". (The moderator confirmed that she was already planning for e-vote based tallies.) The same sentiment could well be expected in Arlington should an e-vote system be implemented.

Based on our observations, and conversations with rules committee members, Framingham does not ever have anonymous votes when using the e-vote system. Successive screens with name/precinct/vote data are displayed after each e-vote, and the results of the electronically-tallied votes by town meeting member are published on the town website following each meeting. (The official voting results for the Fall Special Town Meeting sessions, including the October 23 session that we attended, can be seen via http://www.framinghamma.gov/weblink8/Browse.aspx?startid=9409, navigating through the "2012" folder to the "Fall Special Town Meeting - October 16, 2012" folder.)

A member told us he thought everyone "loved" the system, and that the best thing about it was accountability; he thought people took their votes a little more seriously because they knew how they voted would be displayed to their peers. When asked if this changed the culture around voting, he said he didn't think it did very much, but it might if the votes were made more public; it was his (incorrect, as per the above) impression that the votes were not published.

Logistics

TM rules committee members assist with e-voting administration. Members check in with the town clerk first, then move down the table to pick up their assigned remote (same number each time) from volunteers from the rules committee. This process went very smoothly and quickly. There were two or three volunteers handing out remotes, for over 200 TM members.

One self pick-up and one self drop-off of voting devices was observed while no one was staffing the table. Volunteers were seated in chairs from which the process was clearly visible and may have been watching, but no one was at the table.

We were told that members return the remotes in bulk bins placed at major exits, at the conclusion of each night. Rules committee volunteers file them, and an OTI contractor takes care of whatever electronic logging, maintenance, and functionality testing is required between that point and the next meeting.

There was no test e-vote taken this night. It's unclear whether that was an oversight or if the Framingham TM has garnered enough confidence in the system to do without further test votes.

We observed a number of new amendments being introduced, and the moderator worked with the voting system operator (the OTI contractor) to prepare the votes while the debate was going on. This appeared to work smoothly although there was a 1 or 2 minute delay in switching the display screen to the voting system after the moderator finally called for the first vote. (We didn't find out why this was the case.)

We were told that the operator is usually prepared with a number of blank templates that can be filled in with the name of newly arising amendments etc. requiring a vote. This apparently speeds up the process.

The voting screens did not include the text of the motions. Instead they had descriptive titles and relied on members to make the connection between those titles and what the pending question was based on previous discussion and the Moderator's description.

We were told that a new member was sworn in just before the meeting, and was assigned a voting device "on the fly" without difficulty. Joel Winett (former Framingham TM moderator who chaired Framingham's e-voting study/implementation committee) detailed the required credentialing process, which includes an oath and several signatures.

Device "hot-swaps" due to failures during the meeting are handled by the OTI contractor. (We didn't observe any cases of failure, but were told about it by the rules committee member.)

Observations from e-votes witnessed

All of the votes we observed ran very smoothly and quickly. It seemed clear that everyone was comfortable using the system and no objections or problems arose.

Only the total number of individuals that had voted was displayed in real time during the voting window, NOT broken out by yes/no/abstain or individual member name and precinct. Those breakouts were only shown immediately after the voting window closed.

The displayed voting period does not track the actual voting period exactly. It was clear, from observation of the real time display, that some votes were being accepted by the system a few seconds prior to the 20-second countdown. Also, according to a rules committee member, votes entered or changed during the last two seconds of the clock might not be counted. We were shown how, if someone pressed a key on their device before voting was opened or after it was closed, that the device would not confirm a YES, NO, or ABSTAIN vote.

The e-voting results displays (arrangement, font size, timing, etc.) used by Framingham were adequate for someone familiar with the use of the system to be able to confirm their personal vote on the fly, as long as they were paying attention. It would be a bit more difficult to ascertain how multiple other members voted given the timing of the screens. We know, however, that the OTI system used by Framingham is configurable for how many seconds each screenful is up, font size, number of members shown per screen, and so on, so this observation may not be completely relevant for a differently-configured system. In any case, review of the screens in real time during the meeting cannot be relied upon as an absolute check on illegal voting.

Meeting room infrastructure

The Framingham meeting room appears to be somewhat larger than Arlington's (in width if not length); thus we know that at least the particular transmitting and receiving devices that they are using should have an appropriate range for Arlington.

We noted fixed camera installations around the hall, which can be assumed to be used by the local access cable station, but did not inquire about whether they are displaying the e-vote output to home viewers. This is something that we can ask Joel about if of interest.